

Newbury Trustees Submit Proposal to West Geauga School Board

Newbury, Ohio: On June 14, 2021, the Newbury Township Trustees submitted a proposal to acquire the approximately 39 acres containing the former Newbury School buildings from the West Geauga Board of Education. The West Geauga Board had acquired the real estate as part of the June 30, 2020, school district transfer of the Newbury School District into the West Geauga School District. The proposal by the Newbury Trustees was in response to a request for a proposal from The West Geauga School Board dated May 28, 2021.

In July 2020, William Skomrock, Chairperson of the Trustees appointed a five-member task force to gather information about the property and make recommendations to the trustees about the feasibility of acquiring the property for a community center. The Task Force has met more than 30 times since July 2020 and has researched demand for rental space, historic operating expense, demolition and construction costs and operations of similar former school buildings owned by municipalities in nearby communities.

The property consists of the former High School Building, Elementary School Building, athletic fields, parking lots, playground area and an outdoor laboratory located in a wetland area in the southeast corner of the property. The improvements to the property were made at various times ranging from the construction of the original part of the High School in 1928 to the football/soccer stands erected in 2018.

A number of possibilities for development of the property have been discussed by the Task Force including retention, partial demolition or full demolition of the existing High School Building. Each scenario carries its own set of construction costs, operating costs and resulting benefits.

Chairperson Skomrock noted, "The acquisition of this property is a unique opportunity for Newbury residents to control management and development of this 39-acre property which is adjacent to Newbury's 88-acre Oberland Park. While much has been accomplished in the past 12 months, more research is needed. In order for this acquisition to take place, we would need to (1) complete research on construction and operating costs, (2) complete negotiations and come to an agreement with the West Geauga Board of Education and (3) obtain the approval of Newbury voters for any ballot issue to support the operation of the property."

The West Geauga Board of Education has indicated that they would like to dispose of the property and they have two options for disposal, transfer to another governmental entity or a public auction. A public auction would mean the property would be in private hands and the residents of Newbury would lose the opportunity to have any input over its future use.

Interested parties can follow future developments on this acquisition by attending weekly Task Force meetings on Tuesday evenings at 7pm at the Town Hall or by Zoom, or by attending Trustee meetings on the first and third Wednesdays in the Town Hall at 7 pm in person or by Zoom. Please consult the Township's website for links to Zoom and for the most recent updates on meeting dates.